



## Bleomycin (Blenoxane®)

*At the Clinical Center referred to as bleomycin (BLEE-o-my-sin).*

---

**How Given:** Intravenously (by vein), intramuscularly (by injection into the muscle), or subcutaneously (by injection into the tissue under the skin).

**Drug Action:** Bleomycin prevents cancer cells from growing by binding together or breaking apart the building blocks that form DNA. DNA is the genetic material in cells used to make new cells.

**Side Effects:**

1. Fever or chills can occur within a few hours after treatment and can last for 2 to 12 hours.
2. Facial flushing or a warm sensation can occur while receiving bleomycin.
3. Temporary skin changes, such as a rash, similar to sunburn, can occur 1 to 2 days after treatment. Darkening and thickening of skin over joints can occur 1 to 3 weeks after treatment and will slowly go away. Skin peeling can occur.
4. Lip, mouth, and throat sores can occur.
5. Temporary hair thinning can occur.
6. Allergic reactions can occur but are uncommon.
7. Lung changes can occur over time. Symptoms that might indicate lung changes are shortness of breath or cough. Smoking makes these symptoms worse.

**Special Instructions:**

1. Tell your nurse or doctor **immediately** if you have itching, hives, rash, changes in breathing, or if you feel dizzy while receiving bleomycin.

2. The injection site can become sore. A warm, moist towel put on the area three or four times a day can decrease this soreness. If bleomycin is given by vein, the vein can become hard and discolored.
3. Protect skin from the sun. Wear protective clothing and use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 15 or more while outdoors.
4. Before any medical or dental procedures, tell your doctor that you have received bleomycin.
5. Call your NIH doctor or nurse if you
  - have a temperature of 101.0 °F (38.3 °C) at any time, or have a temperature of at least 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) that lasts 1 hour or occurs two times within a 24-hour period
  - have a persistent cough or shortness of breath
  - are unable to drink for more than 1 day or unable to eat for more than 2 days after treatment



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Living with Cancer Chemotherapy Series  
January 1983; draft, October 1999; Approved February 2001  
National Institutes of Health, CC Nursing Department

Questions about the Clinical Center? [OCCC@cc.nih.gov](mailto:OCCC@cc.nih.gov)